

## **MUS 621. Listening**

Spring 2012

Marion Anderson Seminar Room, Van Pelt Library

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Listening constitutes an increasingly important question across the human sciences, figuring in a number of recent histories and ethnographies, and in fields including music studies, literary criticism, sound studies, sound art and sound media theory and criticism, cognitive studies, psychology, and philosophy, among others. We will consider recent work on the nature, form, and modes of listening: the relation of sound to listening, listening in musical, ecological, and political contexts; listening in its materiality. We will seek to assess how one might approach and study listening within the ever shifting contexts of the human sciences.

Protocols!:

Regular participation is expected of all seminar members. Everyone should come ready every week to discuss the materials (readings, listening examples) in detail. Participation in the discussion page of the seminar (Blackboard) constitutes a good alternative, should you not feel chatty during class. It is encouraged to avoid 'seek and destroy'-style discussion. Sharp criticism needs to be balanced with consideration of how to improve an argument in the terms it sets up, first, before considering how one might have approached a topic or issue through different means and with a whole new set of questions.

Each week, there will be designated discussants. The discussants will be prepared to respond to readings, select passages for close reading and consideration, and relate materials to previous readings or listening examples. A brief outline of your points given in advance (the night before the seminar) will be much appreciated, as it will facilitate questions from other seminar members.

In addition, the discussants will present the seminar with objects around which to bring out relations to the readings. These objects can be visual, aural, it can be an image, a sound, or a machine, a composition or literary text. The objects can be original, created by someone else, or found.

Each week, post-seminar respondents will summarize the session's discussion, add any bibliographic or phonographic references that may have been brought up in class, and generate two points for further discussion. This will be part of a collective gathering of information for the entire seminar.

## Projects:

Although this is technically a research seminar, papers and final projects can take different forms. I expect papers to reflect your ability to synthesize material, to engage in some analytic activity, and to show evidence that you have engaged in revision of your ideas as you initially present them. Final projects include objects along the lines of the ones we will bring to seminar on a weekly basis. Either way, you must write and engage existing scholarship. Papers can be synthetic, review, or research based, or they can serve as commentary on (your) creative work. I encourage you to work across historical, ethnographic, music-analytic, and other methodologies.

The time line for projects is as follows:

- A proposal of 4-6 pages by week 9
- A drafted short talk 10-12 pages by Week 13
- A presentation of your talk on Week 14
- The final project, fully written (20-25 pp. for a paper; 12-15 pp. for accompanying document to a creative work) no later than one week after your presentation.

## Schedule

Week 1:

Introduction: listening modes and listening modalities

Week 2:

Musicology's Audition—Listening/Hearing

Reading: Brittan; Steege; Barthes; Chion

Listening: Mendelssohn, *Octet*; Berlioz, *Queen Mab Scherzo*; Janáček, *In the Mists*, *Concertino*

Optional reading: Attali ("Listening," in *Noise*); Bernstein; Cox and Warner (Glossary and Chronology); Stockfelt

Week 3:

Soundscapes

Reading: McLuhan; Schafer; Samuels, et al.; Stockfelt

Optional reading: Helmreich; Schaeffer

Week 4:

The Country and the City

Reading: Corbin; Dillon; Johnson; Kassabian; Sterne

Week 5:

Noise, Violence

Reading: Connor; Cusick; Novak

Listening: LaMonte Young

Week 6:

Guest: Amy Cimini

Philosophical Interlude: Auto-Affection and Deconstruction

Reading: Cimini; Derrida; Merleau-Ponty; Oliveros

Listening: Amacher; Lucien; Oliveros

Week 7

Silence, Harkening, Thinking

Reading: Heidegger; Vogelin

Listening: TBA

Spring Break

Week 8:

Listening: Modern and Otherwise

Reading: Adorno; Subotnik; Szendy

Listening: Mozart, *Don Giovanni*; Schoenberg, Op. 11, no. 2; Girlwalk//All Day

Week 9 (proposal short draft due):

Guest: Eric Drott

Listening to and through Genres:

Reading: Bourdieu; Drott; Latour; Lehire

Listening: Grissey

Week 10

Words, Ears, and Sounds

Reading: Calvino; Cavarero; Schwartz

Listening: Berio, *Un re in ascolto*

## Week 11

Guest: Benjamin Steege

Material Ears – On Helmholtz

Reading: Helmholtz; Steege

## Week 12

Guest: Peter Szendy

Philosophical Interlude: Sharing

Reading: Heidegger; Nancy; Szendy

## Week 13 (proposal talk due)

Composers' Ears

Reading: Lachenmann; Ferneyhough; Reich; Stockhausen

Listening: TBA

## Week 14:

Presentations

<sup>1</sup> This model of discussion owes to the seminar structure of J. Sterne's courses. See <http://steretworks.org/courses/>